

# WHAT'S NEW!

DNRC Conservation Districts Bureau

Feb 2008

Administrators... please share this with your supervisors! Also, Supervisors, if you'd like to receive this via email, please let me know, & I'll add you to the list so you receive it sooner!.

**Administrative Grants** are due by May 1. Attached are two documents. One is the administrative grant cover sheet and the other is the administrative application spreadsheet for FY 09. If done correctly, your FY 09 application will also serve as your FY 08 grant report. Please give Laurie a call if you have any questions.

**310 survey** for 2007 is attached. Please fill this out and phone, fax, or e-mail your survey to Laurie by the date indicated on the survey form. We will use these numbers to determine the amount of 310 administrative funding you will receive in FY 09.

**Elections Reminder** – have interested individuals submit their nominating petitions to your county election administrator before March 22. Supervisors whose terms are up at the end of the year and wish to run again must submit a nominating petition between **January 22 and March 20, 2008**. You can obtain a nominating petition from your county election office. This petition must be signed by 10 qualified electors that live anywhere within the district boundaries. For more info, click the link to the SOS office. <http://sos.mt.gov/elb/calendar/index.asp>

**HB 223** grant applications are due March 14. The Resource Conservation Advisory Council will meet in early April to make funding decisions.

**Rolling River Trailer** Season Upcoming.....Trailer Training ???????

We have snow for a change and the Rolling Rivers Trailers are hibernating. Soon though it will be trailer season and. Some of you have already requested training. If you would like a training session your area, contact David Martin 444-4253 or [damartin@mt.gov](mailto:damartin@mt.gov).

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## 310 Committee

The 310 committee met and discussed comments received from conservation districts and participating agencies on the draft joint application. We received quite a few great comments from conservation district supervisors and administrators. Thank you for taking the time to make sure what gets changed makes sense. Another revised draft will be sent to you for your review and comments soon. The 310 committee will meet again in middle March or early April to try to finalize the revised application. The plan is to have a new form and instructions in place by July 1.

## **2007 Range Leader of the Year Awards**

The Governor's Rangeland Resources Executive Committee (RREC) is proud to present the Range Leader of the Year Award. Each year the RREC will give this award to two outstanding members of Montana's agriculture community. The categories for the award are Producer and Agency/Consultant/Other.

For 2007 the RREC has selected **Rick Caquelin** with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in the Stanford Field Office for the Agency category and the Producer award goes to **Noel Keogh** of Nye, Montana. These two individuals have proven to be leaders in the field of rangeland management. Their dedication to education and sound range management practices is what the RREC admires about these two frontrunners in agriculture. Rick and Noel were presented with their awards at the 2008 Winter Grazing Seminar banquet in Sidney, MT on January 23<sup>rd</sup>.



l-r .. Diane Algren, Les Gilman, Rick Caquelin, Steve Hedstrom & Noel Keogh

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## **Winter Grazing Seminar was huge success!!!**

With over 150 attendees, it'll be tough to beat next year, but if you're up for the challenge, let Heidi know soon!! She is looking for a CD interested in hosting the WGS 2009. Heidi is willing to come and visit during a board meeting to discuss what hosting the seminar entails. Here's your chance... give her a call at 444-6619!!

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## **No Adverse Impact Conference:** Feb 21-22, Fairmont Hot Springs

This is going to be the conference to attend. Watershed groups and conservation districts are facing all sorts of issues within their watersheds, with floodplain development being a big contributor to watershed degradation.



NAI is a common sense approach to development that not only addresses development, but protects property rights. Hence the title of the conference... **"Preserving Watersheds - Protecting Property Rights"**. No one likes additional regulations right? We can all agree on that. However, when developments have a negative impact on natural resources or on existing development, it's already too late to address it effectively. Contact Karl for more information regarding this... [kchristians@mt.gov](mailto:kchristians@mt.gov) or 444-3022

# CAPACITY BUILDING:

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**How well is your District known in your community?** Do the residents of your county know who you are and what your CD does or represents? Is there more that your CD can be doing? These questions should be asked annually, and answered realistically. This will be the first part of a number of Capacity Building articles and ideas to help you build your CD's identity even more. If you have a success story, and would like to share it, please let Karl know!!

## **BUILDING A DISTRICT IDENTITY** (NASCA Best Practices for Field Staff Sharing Session)

Building an identity is a lot like climbing a mountain - one step at a time. You need to start small! Your district can take many small steps and actions that can help build a strong district identity. Many of following steps don't cost much but will go a long way to building a strong identity.

### **Public Visibility**

- If someone dials your district phone number, does the district administrator answer with the name of your conservation district?
- When a caller hears the directory of agencies when calling the USDA office, is the name of your district listed?

### **Important Signs**

- Do landowners, communities, counties and other organizations know that your district exists as a totally separate organization from NRCS?
- Does your district have road signs at the boundaries of the district?
- Does your district have signs posted on projects completed with cooperating ranches and farms, or on CD rental equipment?
- Does your district have signs posted on projects completed throughout the district such as living snow fences, stream restoration projects, or other conservation projects?

### **County**

- Does your district have a supervisor who attends the county commission meetings when natural resource or conservation issues are on the agenda?
- Does your CD have a good understanding of the relationship between the county commissioners and the conservation district?
  - Do the commissioners know their responsibilities for levying taxes?
  - Do the commissioners get a copy of your meeting agendas, and your annual report?

### **District Employees**

- Do your district employees wear name badges or articles of clothing identifying them as district employees?
- Do your district employees distribute business cards identifying them as district employees?

### **Supervisors**

- Do your supervisors wear name badges or articles of clothing identifying them as district supervisors?
- Do your supervisors have business cards to distribute identifying them as district supervisors?
- Do all supervisors know their district's mission and are they able to articulate it to the public?

### **Newsletters and Local Publicity**

- Does your district distribute a newsletter to not only landowners but also organizations agencies, and local/state/federal elected officials?
- Does your district submit articles to the local newspapers on a regular basis?

### **Small Steps to Climb Big Mountains**

- Building an identity begins with small steps and activities that can bring “BIG” benefits to your conservation district.
- Start your journey today with just some of the ideas in this presentation & enjoy the walk!!

**FYI:**

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### ***A little about the "Open Meetings" requirement:*** (excerpted from MCA's 2-3-201-213)

The legislature finds and declares that conservation districts in this state exist to aid in the conduct of the peoples' business. It is the intent of this law that actions and deliberations of all public agencies shall be conducted openly.

**Meetings.** “Meeting” means the convening of a quorum of the conservation district, whether corporal or by means of electronic equipment, to hear, discuss, or act upon a matter over which the CD has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power. This means that whether a meeting is in person or by a teleconference where a quorum is present discussing conservation district business, that meeting must be noticed and the public must be given an opportunity to participate.

The law provides the following exceptions to open meetings:

- The Chair may close the meeting during the time the discussion relates to a matter of individual privacy and then if and only if the presiding officer determines that the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure. The right of individual privacy may be waived by the individual about whom the discussion pertains and, in that event, the meeting must be open.
- A meeting may be closed to discuss a strategy to be followed with respect to litigation when an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public agency.

**How does the public participate?** The law states that the public has the right to know about your meetings, and have the opportunity to participate, and provides guidance to local governments for permitting and encouraging the public to provide input into your decisions. Your district will be considered to have complied if you publish a notice in the newspaper via an advertisement or news story sufficiently prior to making decisions. You can also post notices, run radio ads, or post notices on your website. Keep copies of your notices for your records. Additionally, your agendas must include an item that allows the public to comment on issues that are not on the agenda, but is

within the jurisdiction of the conservation district. To learn more about public meetings and public notices, see MCA, 2-3-101 on page 125 in your CD law book.

**Minutes.** The statutes spells out that the minutes of meetings are open to public inspection.

- Minutes of all meetings required to be open shall be kept and shall be available for inspection by the public.
- Minutes shall include *without limitation*:
  - date, time, and place of meeting;
  - a list of the individual board members in attendance;
  - the substance of all matters proposed, discussed, or decided; and
  - at the request of any member, a record by individual members of any votes taken.

# CD SPOTLIGHT:

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## Hill County Car Body Removal!

A success story in Hill County for 2007 was the removal of a second section of old car bodies from the banks of the Milk River.

Many years ago old car bodies were placed on the banks of the Milk River for erosion control. The Hill County Conservation District (HCCD) administers the 310 law, Montana's Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act, which no longer allows the practice of using car bodies or other foreign material as rip rap.

The Hill County Conservation District joined forces with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP), and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) and on November 9, 2006 (Phase I) and November 15, 2007 (Phase II) they were pulled from the river! What a beautiful sight (see the before and after photos below).

Winston Greely, Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, audio/visual specialist, filmed an outdoor report on the removal. It can be seen at [http://fwp.mt.gov/education/video/view\\_122.aspx](http://fwp.mt.gov/education/video/view_122.aspx)

What an accomplishment! Great job Hill county CD



Before



During



After

# TRAINING:

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## **310 Workshop in Park County:**

**When:** Feb 26, 2008 @ 9:00 am  
**Where:** Livingston-Park County Public Library conference room  
**Contact:** Jacquie Nelson, Park Conservation District Administrator, 406-222-2899 ext.111  
Karl Christians, CDB, 444-3022  
**Who:** Anyone is welcome to attend to learn the 310 process and the supervisor's role in administering the 310 law!

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## **Supervisor Training in Miles City:**

**When:** Feb 27, 2008 @ 10:30am - 2:30pm  
**Where:** USDA conference room at 3120 Valley Drive East, Miles City  
**Contact:** Carol Watts, Custer Conservation District Administrator, 406-232-7905 ext.103  
Karl Christians, CDB, 444-3022  
**Who:** Administrators and Supervisors are encouraged to attend!

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## **Other Training**

CD's ... if you have a specific area or interest for training, please let Karl know. The CDB will develop the presentations/training and bring it to you.



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**Subject: 310**

**Q:** How does the 310 law apply to the removal of **beaver dams**?

**A:** Beaver dams may be excluded from the 310 law in emergency situations where the beaver dams are endangering the public health (87-1-224, MCA) or interfering with water rights (75-7-104, MCA). In this case, the emergency provisions of the 310 law would apply. However, anyone planning to engage in a project (remove a beaver dam) is required to give proper notice to the supervisors if there is no emergency situation.

**Q:** Are 310 applications open to the public, even before the board sees them?

**A:** Yes. All records, once the CD receives them, are open to the public. In an application contains proprietary information, an applicant can request that part of the application be kept private, but CDs should always seek legal advice prior to withholding any information from the public.

**Q:** Can a CD require a person to submit their request in writing?

**A:** Probably not. Records are to be available to the public at all reasonable times.

**Q:** Can a CD charge for records?

**A:** Yes. Reasonable fees may be charged for copying records and for time spent doing so, if it is over a half-hour. This may be a little complicated if you are using USDA equipment, so make sure to check their policies before charging for records if you are using their equipment.

**Subject: Neighbors file!! Thank you Wyoming for the clarification!!!!**





## **Conservation Districts Bureau (CDB) Staff ... here to assist you!!**

The CDB is staffed up and available to help you any way we can. Please call us or email us anytime for assistance or questions. Got a big Project? Maybe we can help with that too!

### **Meet & Greet the Staff:**

This month, we'll focus on Heidi Olbert!!

Heidi Olbert has been with the Conservation Districts Bureau for 2 years as the Rangeland Resources Program Coordinator. She is originally from Colorado and completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Range Science from Montana State University. Her previous work experience includes positions with the Undaunted Stewardship Program under MSU Extension in Bozeman and as a Soil Conservation Technician with the NRCS in northeast Montana.



Under the guidance of the Rangeland Resources Executive Committee, Heidi coordinates three range related events throughout the year; the State Winter Grazing Seminar, Montana Youth Range Camp and the Governor's Range Tour. These events are hosted by conservation districts across the state and Heidi has enjoyed the opportunity to work with the wonderful people in these organizations. Other items that she is involved with include the Envirothon, Range Days, Small Acreage Workshops, Monitoring for Success and various county based educational events.

When she's not traveling the state, Heidi enjoys spending time with her horses; riding in team penning competitions and helping friends with ranch work.

You can reach Heidi at 444-6619 or email her at [holbert@mt.gov](mailto:holbert@mt.gov).

# Calendar

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<b><u>Date:</u></b>	<b><u>Activity:</u></b>	<b><u>Contact:</u></b>
Feb 5:	Stillwater County CD Realtors Workshop	<a href="mailto:damartin@mt.gov">damartin@mt.gov</a>
Feb 20-21	"No Adverse Impact Conference" at Fairmont	<a href="mailto:kchristians@mt.gov">kchristians@mt.gov</a>
Feb 21	Workshop for Board Members in Miles City, featuring Paul Lachapelle, MSU. Hosted by the Custer Co. Extension Service	406-874-3370
Feb 26:	310 Workshop in Park County	<a href="mailto:kchristians@mt.gov">kchristians@mt.gov</a>
Feb 27	Supervisors training in Miles City	<a href="mailto:kchristians@mt.gov">kchristians@mt.gov</a>

<b><u>Deadlines:</u></b>		<b><u>Contact:</u></b>
Feb 4	Applications for MACD Travel set-aside funds	<a href="mailto:lzeller@mt.gov">lzeller@mt.gov</a>
Mar 14	223 Grant Applications	<a href="mailto:lzeller@mt.gov">lzeller@mt.gov</a>
Mar 20	Submitting a nominating petition for election w/ SOS	
July:	Watershed Planning & Assistance Grant Applications	<a href="mailto:damartin@mt.gov">damartin@mt.gov</a>
Anytime:	Education Mini Grants	<a href="mailto:rcampbell@mt.gov">rcampbell@mt.gov</a>
Anytime:	310 Legal and Technical Assistance	<a href="mailto:lzeller@mt.gov">lzeller@mt.gov</a> or <a href="mailto:kchristians@mt.gov">kchristians@mt.gov</a>